



Stanford eCorner

Befriend Failure

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Jonah Greenberger, co-founder of Bright, a solar-energy startup that delivers subscriptions to homes in developing countries, shares advice he learned from “The Power of Habit,” a book by Charles Duhigg that posits how things people always do seem easy, while things we rarely do seem difficult. Greenberger says the more you fail, the more comfortable failure becomes, making it easier to recover and try again.



Transcript

- Have you guys read the book, I think it's called The Power of Habit? It's one of my favorite books. It basically argues, and this has actually been life transforming, I suggest everyone read this book, that things that you do on a regular basis are easy to keep doing, and things that you don't are really hard to do. I think failure is actually one of them, specifically recovering from failure gets a lot easier the more you do it, and it's really hard if you've never done it, if you live a really cushy life. Something that I didn't realize is that, we have all these stories about great entrepreneurs, or people that are really successful, and it seems like it was really easy for them to do it and they always just had success, and that is just not true. Those people are actually just really, really, really good at recovering from failure. I'd say embrace it. Like, I've failed at every stage of my life, and progressively, I just got better and better at failing and recovering. Even Chevron, it was a disaster trying to get Chevron to really scale up renewable energy. We faced so many barriers. That just really hardened me.

It was nothing like the failures and challenges that came when I was starting Bright. But, I just started to get to this point where I was not afraid of challenges anymore. It was like, I don't know how I'm going to solve this, but I know I've solved all the other ones, and so I know it will happen. I was just in that habit, and so it was possible. There's two reasons startups fail: You run out of money, or you quit. You could say it all really boils up into you just quitting, because if you run out of money and you decide to quit, you're quitting. How can you make yourself not want to quit, and not quit, just keep going.